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may, it is not a subject of artistic criticism—if the public receive his views of humanity, founded, as they are, on the consideration of its weakness, and on the gloomiest conception of God as its protector, making this life awful and dark, that the other may seem bright and hopeful; if they who must judge him accept this as the philosophy of life, it is not our matter. We would rather have had the Youth of man, heaven-guided, leading up to a Manhood resolute, undismayed and self-controlled, sublime in the possession of truth, beautiful in the light of the Sun of life, and then see him pass, like Bunyan's Christian, into the waters of death, erect, and with the halo of a gloriously spent life making radiant the crowned head—the inspired soul casting away the crutches on which materiality hobbled along. Cole's voyager is self-conceited and visionary in youth, cowardly in manhood, and passes, wrecked and shattered, out of time. But, we can deny no man the right to embody his peculiar views in any way he pleases—if he will make allegory his purpose, he may; but if, also, he will be an artist, we may insist that his Art shall be true. Here, unfortunately, Cole failed. As landscapes, the pictures of the "Voyage of Life" are false, artificial, and conventional, and far below the standard he aimed at in his pure landscape-painting. There is not, we believe, in the whole series, one earnest, faithful study from Nature, one object in which we can find that Cole was reverent towards those truths which it is made the duty of the landscape-painter to tell us (which, in fact, he never was, even when he professed only to paint a landscape); rocks, trees, and shrubs, fall alike under the censure of the student of Nature. It is unnecessary, then, to say that they are unimaginative—their fancy, even, is weak and poor, and their untruthfulness is only veiled, not hidden, by a certain boldness of execution amounting to presumption.

To our own feeling, these pictures are the weakest in conception, and least artistic of all Cole's works; and that they have been received with so great favor, is to be attributed to the popular sympathy with the half-religious, half-poetical feeling which designed them. The engravings represent, with remarkable faithfulness, the qualities of the original pictures, even to the characteristics of handling—and, so far as we are concerned, are preferable to the originals, giving all the ideas in much less space. The last of the series is admirable in its rendering of the illuminated clouds and mist; and, on the whole, the work is very creditable to Mr. Smillie.

Architectural.

COLORS SLATES.

A QUARRY was discovered somewhere in Vermont, a few years since, which furnished this material in a great variety of tints, including very pleasant shades of blue, red, and green. Since then it has been extensively used in Vermont, and in some other sections of the country, in the roofing of buildings, by alternating, in mathematical figures, two or more of the tints. The result, to our mind, is very beautiful, though we believe many prominent architects have

opposed their introduction on the ground of their inelegance.

The colors of the Vermont slates are quiet and subdued. They do not intrude upon the eye at the expense of other architectural decorations. A vast variety of beautiful figures may be arranged from their numerous shades of color. They are in every way durable, while they cost but a trifle more than slates of other kinds, and why their use should be so zealously opposed by architects, is incomprehensible to us, unless it is from a want of capacity to discern their merits. In fact one can hardly resist this theory, when he looks about amongst the monuments of architectural folly which everywhere abound.

In France and other parts of Europe, variegated roof tiles were once very generally used in churches and civic structures, with great effect. And, at the present day, the practice is reviving—much antiquarian spirit being embarked in the cause. Everywhere old roofs are being restored. Several public buildings in Paris have been thus refitted with their gay, old coverings.

The fact that the beauty of this method of decoration is sanctioned by foreign artists, will no doubt be eagerly appreciated when our architects hear of it. Then perhaps they will begin to avail themselves of the resources of their colored slates.

That they are vastly superior to colored tiles, aside from the valuable consideration of their natural origin, cannot for a moment be questioned. The tiles have a glazed, reflecting surface, which is peculiarly disagreeable in the sunshine, while the slates are deliciously absorbent.

We hope to see the tinted slates extensively used in our future architecture. The country residences throughout the north are doing much to spread their beauty abroad. It should be the delight of architects to encourage their use as much as possible. One step towards chaste architectural decoration has an immense influence upon the true interests of the Art.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE.

Messrs. Editors:

I HAVE often wondered, while looking at some of our *original* designs for churches, why architects do not have recourse to a method which would enable them to produce buildings, at once the most beautiful, commodious, and correct, at a moderate outlay. I would not imply that any superfluous sums are now-a-days devoted to this kind of architecture, but simply suggest that, under my plan, a much better outlay of money may be made, than the present system admits of. I would urge then, that instead of new designs, or original conceptions, as they are grandly called, formed by the adaptation of a buttress from this church to a window or parapet from that, neat ancient designs, of acknowledged symmetry of proportions, or beauty of detail, should be selected for exact imitation in all their parts, arrangements, and decorations. How often do we see, in England and France, a simple village church, consisting, it may be, of low and rough stone walls, surmounted, and almost overwhelmed by an immense roof, and pierced with some two or three plain windows, between as many bold, irregular

buttresses on each side, or having a short, massive tower, placed in one corner, or in some seemingly accidental position, which nevertheless everybody confesses to be as picturesque, and beautiful, and church-like an edifice, as the most critical eye or the most refined taste could wish to behold. One of these churches might be built for very much less than is expended by moderns on their would-be elegancies of trim, regular buttresses, triple lancet, and curtailed chancel, and which look, after all their affectations, only like a Gothic factory. The simple beauties of a harmonious structure are sacrificed, in order that we may have a loftier tower than our Presbyterian neighbors; and the building-funds are foolishly expended in emasculating the beautiful natural surface of stone, or in working out the extravagant elaborations of sculptured windows.

I long to see in this young country some repetitions of the model churches of the old world. It is not enough that architects wander upon the continent, making measurements and drawings of single parts, but they should grapple with the whole design, with all its unity of parts, so as to be able to build it elsewhere in precisely the same manner. The two most admired buildings in New York are almost repetitions—the City Hall being closely modelled after the Capitol in Rome, by Michael Angelo, and St. Paul's Church after Wren's St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, in London. This is also true of several other of our most admired American structures.

Any architect who would set the example of building new churches after the exact models of good ancient ones, would, we think, have the glory of commencing a new and happy era in the history of modern church-building. Why this should not generally be done, is a mystery to us. Are not ancient churches allowed by all to be most beautiful, and modern ones, by most people, to be most faulty? Since church architecture, in the present day, is strictly imitated, why may we not copy whole and perfect edifices, as well as detached and unconnected parts? The result of the adoption of such a system, would be the gradual return to ancient propriety in ecclesiastical architecture, instead of the introduction of a world of nondescript designs which appear painful to us, and, we doubt not, will appear ridiculous to posterity.

It is generally thought by architects, no doubt, that close imitation implies a reproachful poverty of invention. But it seems to us that it is no sign of weakness to copy acknowledged perfection. It is presumption to attempt to rival it by unmeaning patchwork. I know that there is great pleasure derived from the forming of new combinations. But this must always be experimental, while to repeat an edifice which has been the admiration of ages, is sure of eliciting public admiration, and promoting the interests of true art.

The failure of modern church architecture has given rise to much speculation. It is generally believed that the sudden discovery of some hidden principle will enable us to regain all the lost graces and beauties of ancient architectural compositions. But this must necessarily prove fallacious. There is failure inherent in the very nature of imitative art. A copy cannot be

superior to the original; when it excels, it ceases to be a copy. Art, to arrive at excellence, must pass through the various stages, from the primitive imperfection, and only while it is pursued in the progressive spirit, will it ever achieve perfection. The *inventive imitation* of the present day, is not the true art-spirit. It is not the free exercise of genius inspired by a consciousness of present defects and yet untried capabilities, ever looking forward and improving upon the past; but it is the fettered effort of a mind feebly aware of the beauty of the thing produced, yet unacquainted with the feelings and impulses that produced it.

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EXHIBITION OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY.

FIRST ARTICLE.

THE present exhibition of the Academy must certainly be admitted to be much below the average of the past few years, both in attractiveness and real merit; and the worst feature in it is, that some of the leading artists manifest such unmistakable signs of fixity in their imperfections and mannerisms, as to give us little hope for future exhibitions, except there shall be introduced some new element of the Art-spirit, some fire now dormant, to enliven the *corps* artistic. How absurd seems the never-ceasing wail for the want of patronage of Art, of encouragement for artists, while they themselves are content with deserving less and less each year, the commendation already bestowed, for they who do not advance to greater excellence and to the discovery of new truths in Nature and Art, must absolutely retrograde. There is no quiet summit where we may rest from such labors, but perpetual climbing, with now and then a place for brief rest and refreshment, by *pleasant toil* alone; and to cease ascending is just as certainly to commence descending. The present exhibition is to us a melancholy spectacle on several accounts, but chiefly because it has so many indications that, of even the few artists we have who are capable of doing things worthy of permanence, so small a number are *exerting* themselves to deserve that permanence. There are canvases on which are bestowed labor without thought, power without knowledge, and sentiment without truth; ideas that might have been told on pieces of paper of the size of one's hand, filling huge frames; and, what is, after all, more disastrous, pictures in which are found power and thought, but where the truth, which should have been the inspiration and life of the work, is cramped and confined, even to its deforming, by prescribed modes of treatment and set ways in which it shall be told; and where, instead of abandoning himself to Nature in joyfulness and like a true Seer, the artist freezes his perceptions into certain predetermined forms, and composes his attitudes and his tints as coldly and calculatingly as if it were of more importance that they should be graceful or harmonious than true or expressive, though they can be the former really only as they are the latter also. Everywhere there is manifest a willing stopping short of the full measure of the truth, and with very few exceptions, and mainly of

unimportant works by younger painters, there is a positiveness of conventionalism which belongs rather to the decline than to the youth of a nation's Art.

Even Durand, standing although he does, and justly, at the head of the fraternity in America in point of purely artistic qualities, and distinguished as he is by reverent and conscientious feeling for nature, betrays a partiality of pursuit and a fitfulness of application, which mar works whose value would otherwise be very great. But Durand is not a *genius*, a truth which at once excuses the absence of positive greatness in his works, and makes it more imperative that the rendering of absolute truth should be more satisfactory than it is in them. He lacks imagination entirely, and is deficient in invention, even, in some directions, the want of which qualities can be, not compensated for, but only in some degree atoned for, by the most absolute devotion to truth, and the fullest abandonment to the poetic influences of Nature. In this last respect, we have little fault to find with Durand—none with the picture of this year; but it is only in parts of any picture that he is truthful to the full extent of his power. Thus in his "Symbol," the mountain forms are, if we are capable of judging, unexceptionable, and thoroughly grand; and the distance, with the rain-storm sweeping up the valley, perfectly felt, and rendered quite faultlessly, perhaps; but the clouds, though equally well felt, so far as their general effect is concerned, are feeble and uninventive, seeming as if labored out, from want of precise knowledge of their details of form, and the cumuli beyond the cliff particularly, are conventional, and deficient in the sultry boiling up characteristic of that kind of cloud. The long band of rain-cloud, which sweeps along the flanks of the mountain, is better, but heavy in the terminal fragments, which the wind does not catch and tear off and dissipate, as in nature. In fact, the clouds generally indicate that there have not been the same care and study given by the artist to their forms that have been given to those of trees and rocks. In these latter he is always good and precise; his tree-trunks are justly drawn, their branchings tolerably inventive, and thoroughly wooded, until we arrive at the minor branches and twigs; but in all Durand's pictures we do not remember one instance of a sky which had the appearance which his trees and rocks always have, of having been borrowed from Nature.

In his foregrounds, again, Durand is marked by a sameness, a repetition almost, which expresses poorly the infinite variety of Nature's working. To say nothing of the geologic character of the rock, which is almost always the same, or varying only between limestone and granite, there is a wearisome likeness in the arrangements of rock and heavy foliage, which we would like to see occasionally relieved by a bit of level sward, an open foreground, such as we find in Nature often, and in which, though we find no uncommon charm, we have a quiet satisfaction, and, when *well realized*, a tranquil delight, which rocks and ferns, and fallen tree-trunks, do not give us, be they ever so well painted. There was a partial attempt at this in the "Thunder Storm" of two years since, but the unsatisfactory degree of truth of detail attained, made it evident that Durand does not see

the beauty of the monotonies of Nature—those occasional prosy passages, by which she breaks the chain of incident and forcible objective. We should be glad to see him, with his genuine love for the pure forms of Nature, abandon himself occasionally to the sincere realization of something unstudied and artless—to see some pictures in which we may understand that he never thought of composition, lines, or balance. There is a little too much of this thoughtfulness as to how things will relate to each other, in the foreground of the "Symbol"—a decorousness and well-arrangedness, which is too far from the careless, haphazard, yet always consistent way, in which Nature does things, and which can only be attained in painting, by constant use of her own compositions. The distances of this picture are wholly natural and simple, and strongly felt by the artist; but the foreground bears evidences of labor, and feebleness of conception—the thought of the composer is visible above the rendering of Nature.

But while denying Durand those qualities of genius which make the great Artist, imagination, the electric grasp of the soul of Nature, and the triumphant, intellectual power which inspires us in such a man as Turner, we must admit to him a simplicity and devotion of feeling towards Nature in general, and an understanding of her moral value, which are as rare as brilliant genius; and, as examples, far more valuable in a young school of Art. If he has not power, he has humility; if he has not the creative imagination, he has appreciative feeling; and, in spite of the feebleness of his invention, his pictures contain an amount of the truth of Art, which no other American landscapes have.

Church is an artist from whom much has been expected, and from whom much in fact is due, but who we fear will account poorly for the ability given. For native powers of conception and facility of invention, he is remarkable among modern painters; but, for several years past, the only progress he has evinced has been one toward greater facility in composing variations on one theme—toward velocity rather than perfection of his Art. He has neither imagination, fancy, nor poetic feeling; and cannot, by any possibility, therefore, become a painter of the sentiment of Nature, but he *has* a keenness of vision almost unrivalled, a memory of facts quite so, and an exquisite sense of beauty in form; and only needs careful study of the higher truths of landscape, light and shade, tone, space, &c., so essential to the unity and impressiveness of a picture, to become remarkable as a painter of the material world; but these qualities are neglected in the avidity to gather new and strange facts as material for pictures, forgetting that the sublimity of Art lies, not in the immensity of the objective, but in the loftiness of the feeling in which it is regarded. Church's picture of this year is a fair example of his late South American subjects, differing only by a slight change of the arrangement and position of the parts, and in being a little more morbid in color in the foreground, and facile in execution; but in general tone of color, treatment, and feeling, the same. We do not know how high the mountains were intended to be, but from the fact of the scene being tropical, and the fore-